

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

LEAFLETS
of
POPULAR INFORMATION

No. 10

June 1938

PRUNUS LYONII
CATALINA CHERRY

Prepared
by
RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
of the
NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Canyon
Orange County
California

PRUNUS LYONI
CATALINA CHERRY

Rosaceae

Rose Family

A large evergreen shrub or small tree growing to about 45 ft. in height and attaining a spread of over 30 ft. with a trunk 6 to 8 in. in diameter. Leaves alternate, glabrous, dark green, a little lighter beneath, entire or faintly toothed, especially when young, narrowly to broadly ovate, acuminate, 3 to 5 in. long, on petioles $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 in. long. Inflorescence a raceme 4 to 6 in. long, bearing 20 to 40 white flowers, each about $\frac{3}{8}$ in. across. Calyx 5-cleft, deciduous after flowering. Petals 5 or 6, nearly orbicular. Stamens 20 to 30, inserted at summit of hypanthium. Ovary superior, pistil 1, ovules 2, developing into a 1-seeded drupe, $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 in. in diameter, dark purple or black with sweet pulp and a large stone.

Catalina Cherry has been known under several different botanical names. Prunus, Laurocerasus and Cerasus have all been used for the generic name, while lyoni, integrifolia and ilicifolia var. integrifolia have been applied as specific or varietal names. We have adopted the name Prunus lyoni, honoring Lyon, an early collector on Santa Catalina Island, and for whom a number of insular plants have been named, including the genus Lyonothamnus. There are about 75 to 100 kinds of Prunus scattered throughout the world. Common horticultural forms are the Peaches, Plums, Apricots and Cherries. In California there are about 8 kinds.

Prunus lyoni is distinguished from its mainland relative, Prunus ilicifolia (California or Holly-leaved Cherry) by its larger size, its larger and nearly entire leaves and by its dark purple to black fruits (in ilicifolia the fruits are reddish-purple). Young plants of the Catalina Cherry are usually similar to the Holly-leaved Cherry in that the leaves are toothed.

On Santa Catalina, San Clemente and Santa Cruz Islands the Catalina Cherry is a characteristic endemic species. On Santa Cruz Island there are many fine trees scattered throughout the canyons and hillsides. On Santa Catalina Island the species is not abundant in the vicinity of Avalon, although there are a number of fine specimens in Pebble Beach Canyon. In Cherry

Valley, west of the Isthmus, there is an extensive grove of fine trees. Wild trees grow to over 40 ft. in height and often resemble the California Live Oak (Quercus agrifolia). The creamy-white flowers are borne in profusion in April and May, and the fruits mature in August and September. The large blackish fruits are sweet but insipid and are of little use except as a food for birds.

We have grown Prunus lyoni from seeds obtained both on Santa Cruz and Santa Catalina Islands and detected little if any differences between plants from the two sources. Best results are obtained from seeds gathered soon after the fruit is ripe. The pulp should be removed and the clean seeds dried in the shade, then planted immediately in boxes of sharp sand. In a few weeks the seeds will germinate and they should then be placed in pots. Planting out of potted plants may be done at any season of the year, although early spring is the best time. If the plants are left in the seed boxes until leaves have developed there will usually be considerable loss in transplanting. Early fall plantings will result in plants large enough to set out the following spring. Nurserymen often raise plants to good size in 5-gallon cans, but smaller plants will make better growth and will eventually surpass those from large containers. Catalina Cherries are not particular as to soil, water or exposure and have few diseases or pests.

Catalina Cherries have been widely used as specimen trees in gardens, as small street trees and for both clipped and informal hedges. Throughout the entire year they present a clean bright green foliage. When used for street trees they have but one objectionable feature, which is the fruits. These drop on the walks and streets and make a mess for a few weeks. As a hedge plant they are ideal in that they do not grow as rapidly as Privet or some other plants commonly used for hedges. For foundation plantings around buildings they are of great value and are good substitutes for Eugénias and Pittosporums.

Plants of Catalina Cherries may be obtained from nearly any nurseryman and are probably the most widely used California Native Plant in California gardens.

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
Of The Native Plants of California.

Established 1927

In Memory of John W. Bixby

- o O o -

Purpose: A scientific institution devoted
to the growth and study of the native plants
of California for their botanical, horticult-
ural and popular features.

- o O o -

MAIL ADDRESS

R. F. D., Anaheim, California

- o O o -

Reissued without change of text, April, 1941